

## **The Note** by FenyaFaraday

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**Summary:**

After a car crash, Jim Hopper takes Julie home - and finds the note that changes everything.

## The Note

I was clutching the arm-rest of my chair while waiting for Chief Hopper to get back to the police station. “Don’t freak yourself out, dear”, Flo said from across the room. I must look stressed as hell, I thought to myself, letting go of the arm-rest. My thoughts ran wild. I had crashed my car into Mrs Franklins yard. How had that even happened? Sure, the road had been slippery with ice, but I had new wheels on my ride. Was I going that fast? My head seemed to spin when he entered the room. Chief Hopper, broad and strong and handsome, left my head in silence. He was tall, really tall, and there was no point in denying his authority. I had always had a slight crush on him like you might have a crush on a teacher or something like that. Of course, I had talked to him in the past; this was a very small town after all. But being in this state of mind and him being the one to either save me from the situation or make it worse, that was entirely new terrain for me.

Flo went past me, taking the cigarette from his mouth, and saying something while pointing in my direction. I didn’t catch a word she said; I was too busy trying not to shiver. The chief looked at me, lighting up another cigarette, and came towards me. He crouched down in front of me. “Hello Julie”, he said in a quiet and reassuring tone, “why don’t you come with me into my office for a moment, yes?” I nodded numbly. He knew my name. But I guess, that was his job.

His office smelled of cigarettes and paperwork. Hopper, his arm around my shoulder, guided me inside and sat me down on one of the chairs opposite his desk. I still tried to contain the shivering, but it didn’t quite work. As soon as he sat on his chair, he leaned forward and looked into my eyes. “Tell me what happened, Julie”, he said calmly, putting on a smile that made my knees weak. Luckily, I was already sitting. I stared into his deep blue eyes for a moment, just before revisiting the moment of the crash in my mind, and couldn’t help but tear up. “I...I was just driving home...and....and....I don’t know what happened....I just....suddenly...everything was so fast...”, I sobbed, not able to shake the feeling of shock and guilt. “Don’t cry, sweetheart”, Hopper said and got up to come around his desk. Again, he crouched down next to me, his hand brushing my arm carefully.

"It's alright", he said, "Mrs Franklin is not going to press charges." "What?", I said, still sobbing a little, "but why? I ruined her garden!" The Chief took my hand and looked at me. There was something in the way he treated me, more like I was a friend (or even more?) than just a girl that had had an accident. "Well, I talked to her, and she decided to leave it be." How did he manage that to happen? Did she really not want to press charges or had he convinced her not to? Either way, my breaths got more steady. I brushed the tears out of my face. "Okay, okay", I mumbled. "Now, can I give you a ride home?", Hopper asked and added "Please?" when he saw the uncertain expression on my face. "You don't have to, Chief, I can walk home", I said in a low voice, holding back another sob. "Sweetheart, you cannot walk home like that. Besides, it's already dark outside, and I will not be responsible for anything happening to you on your way home in the dark." He got up again, looking even taller from my position in the chair, and put his cigarette in the ashtray on his desk.

Chief Hopper took me to his car, helping me onto the passenger's seat and then getting into the driver's seat. "Are you sure, you're fine?", he asked. "Yeah, sure, I just...I just need time to process this...", I mumbled. But this was not about the accident. It was more about the looks he gave me, the way he treated me. Never before had someone been that concerned about me. When he put his hand on the gear shift, I realised how big his hands were. My imagination started to run wild, but I stopped myself from diving in too deep.

We drove past Mrs Franklin's house, and I saw the damage I had caused in the pale light of a street lamp. Immediately, I started crying again. The look on Hopper's face got concerned again. "Hey, don't cry, everything will be fine", he said while brushing a tear from my cheek with the back of his hand. I froze at his touch, goosebumps spreading all over my body. Fortunately, he could not see that. The rest of the way home was very quiet, besides me sobbing from time to time. When the car stopped, he turned towards me, just looking at me with his super blue eyes. He looked like he wanted to do or say something, but he just got out of the car and around it to open my door, helping me get out. I was still sobbing, keeping most of the tears in, but not all of them. "Come here", Hopper said and pulled me to his chest, wrapping his arms around me. It felt like the safest place on earth to me, so I flung my arms around him, too.

A few moments later, we were on our way to my front door. "Thank you, Chief", I said while fumbling with my keys. "Anytime", he said, "you sure I can leave you alone?" I nodded and unlocked the door. Being the clumsy mess that I was, I tripped and almost fell right into the hallway - almost, because Hopper caught me with a tight grip on my arm, pulling me back so that I fell right against his body instead. "Careful, sweetheart", he said from behind, his voice prickling in my ear. I just nodded and went inside. Hopper followed me, closing the door behind him. "How about I stay for a few minutes until you calmed down a bit, huh?" "Don't you have cases to solve?", I asked. "Well, if you don't want me to stay-" "NO!", I said a little too enthusiastic. "I mean, no, please stay. I just don't want to be keeping you off work." He smiled a little, and it melted my heart instantly.

I lead him into the living room, past the cabinet that held my phone and a stack of notes. They weren't really notes, more like scribbles I made while on the phone. The one on the top of the stack said Jim Hopper surrounded by a few little hearts. Maybe it was more than just a little crush. Anyway, I had totally forgotten about the note and just strode past it into the living room. Chief Hopper, however, stopped for a second and picked up the note with his name on it. The moment I turned around to offer him a seat, I knew what he was holding. He looked from the note to me and back to the note again. Then he came towards me, stopping inches before me, and handed me the note. "I'm almost twice your age, Julie", he said seriously, but his eyes told a different story. There were happiness and relief in his eyes. I felt the heat rushing to my face. "I-I'm...you were not supposed to...", I stammered. "Find this?", He ended my sentence. I felt dizzy; everything seemed to be moving around me. First the accident and now this? I still hadn't quite worked through the shock of my car crash, how was I supposed to handle this situation? Being unsteady on my feet, I tumbled backwards, and yet again, Hopper saved me from falling. His arm went around my shoulders now, as he put me back up on my feet again. "Everything alright?", He asked, not letting go of me. "We should sit you down, come on." He led me to my couch, where I sat down thankfully. I still had the note in my hand and stared at it, afraid to look up at him. Hopper sat down right beside me, put his hand underneath my chin and softly forced me to look at him. "Is this a scribble or a feeling?" he said, nodding towards the note. "I don't know", I said quietly and shrugged. He was a tall

man indeed, and he could be very intimidating, but right now he gave me butterflies. “You know how old I am, don’t you?”, He said while taking the note from my hands and putting it away. When his hand brushed mine, I felt the butterflies spread from my stomach to basically everywhere else in my body. “I don’t care”, I said, almost whispering. Hopper came closer now, his face only inches from mine. “Are you sure?”, He whispered as his hand moved from my chin to my cheek, brushing away what was remaining of my earlier tears with his thumb. “Yes”, I breathed out and slowly his lips met mine, soft and warm, his beard brushing my face. He tasted of cigarettes and coffee and made me forget about everything. There was no car crash, no problems or worries. The butterflies had exploded into fireworks, sending a prickling sensation through every last vein of my body.

Once our lips parted, he put his arms around me, holding me close and tight and save. In fact, I felt so good that the shock from the car crash had gone completely and I started to feel normal again – well, normal with a sprinkle of obviously falling head over heels for Chief Jim Hopper. I freed myself from his hug and said: “I’m hungry.” He kissed me on the forehead and got up. “Alright, let’s get you something to eat.” He offered me a hand which I took, and he pulled me off the couch. I led the way into the kitchen just stood there for a short moment, not knowing what to do next. Jim was right behind me. He laid his hands on my shoulders and said: “How about mac and cheese? Everyone has mac and cheese at home.” I took a few steps forward and opened the cupboard above me to get the mac and cheese instant meals out – I had more than enough at home, I was not the best cook. “Let me get that”, I heard Jim’s voice in my hear just before he grabbed two packets right out of the cupboard. I turned around, trapped between my kitchen counter and the police chief, and just looked up at him. “Thanks”, I said. He smirked, pulled me in for a short hug and then started to open up the packets.

It had started to rain by the time we both sat on the couch watching a movie. We hadn’t talked about the kiss or the note again, which made me feel a little uncertain, but Jim had not left my side once this evening. He had stayed close enough to catch me, should I trip or stumble again. Halfway through the movie, I felt the exhaustion of the day making me incredibly tired. I laid my head down on Jim’s

shoulder and closed my eyes. The last thing I remembered that night where his lips on my head and his voice whispering “good night, sweetheart.”